

# If You Want to Learn About the Infinite Go to Hobo College

## Most Unique Institution in Country—A Bright Light in the Bowery

By B. M. Johns

THE Hobo University has entered the second week of its current session. It is situated at 202 Bowery, and is easily one of the most remarkable of the country's many institutions of learning.

Beyond a doubt I had come at an off time. All colleges have their off days, even a hobo college. Its cloistered halls, consisting of a room above a florists' shop, shared by the Migratory Workers' Union, had a bare, deserted look. There were two occupants in the university who gave no apparent evidence of imbibing either deep or shallow draughts of the unprohibited and consequently 2.75 mixture of the Pierian Spring. One was reading theatrical notes. The other, his face wreathed in the untrammelled reaches of a beard as long and glowing as Canute's, was seated close to the wall, a drooping felt hat covering his forehead, a student's bag at his feet. Opposite the two uncurtained windows the elevated was thundering with all the reverberating discords an elevated can conjure. Neither of them was a hobo. Neither of them was studying.

I felt the pangs of bitter disappointment. As I look back on it I wonder how it was possible.

I came to see the Pierian Spring playing in a needle spray over an unlittered, conventionally unshaven aggregation. I left with the echoes of the Pierian million horsepower waterfall roaring through the cloisters of 202 Bowery, and I left with one conclusion.

### The Infinite

If you want to hear about the infinite mixed with religion and the absolute, if you want to hear all about Leibnitz's monads and Descartes's cogito ergo sum, if you have any doubt about man's relation to the universe, or if there's anything you want clarified about the traffic regulations of space, if your past education left any of these things in doubt—just go to the Hobo University.

"Getting back to fundamentals, that's what we're doing," is the way James Eads How, who came in a few minutes later, explained it. James Eads How is the president of the Hobo University. He is also the dean, the committee on admissions and if there are any fellows, he is one of the fellows, too. Aside from this James Eads How is an organizer of Migratory, Casual and Unemployed Workers and their friends, but above all he is president of the new movement, the Hobo University. He is admirably fitted to be president. Look him up in the catalogue of Harvard University students, and you will find he was under the elms of Cambridge from '87 to '89. From the same source you will discover that he is able to write S. T. B. and M. D. after his name. He has attended the Meadville Theological Seminary and the College of Physicians and Surgeons at St. Louis. Not that Mr. How mentions any of these things. He is interested in his university and not in himself. And just as he is admirably fitted to be president of a university, Mr. How is dressed for the part.

From first appearance he does not look as though he had a string of initials after his name. His clothes hang about his slim and slightly stooping figure in undulating folds. His trousers are bagged at the knees. His coat is an old one. His shirt is of the O. D. type worn last year by Young America and minus a necktie. But his face is the face of a scholar, a long, kindly face, with the brow of a thinker, and a mouth that twists into a gentle smile.

"Yes," said Mr. How, "we are getting back to fundamentals." As he talked he was moving the chairs from the wall and arranging them in neat rows in the centre of the room. It was evident he was turning the president's office into a recitation room. The only question was, Where were the students?

### Wealth

"For instance," said Mr. How, "there is the question of wealth. Our friends in the Hungarian Republic allow a man 10,000 kronen at 4 per cent interest. Every one is on the same plane as every one else and we have a true democracy."

I wished to continue the discussion further, but Mr. How was busy. The university was about to go in session. Mr. How had come all the way from Atlantic City to assume the du-



James Eads How, S. T. B., M. D., president of the Hobo University

ties of office. Where he would be later he did not know. He lived almost anywhere. He slept almost anywhere the night overtook him—any lodging house or park bench. It was all the same to him, because Mr. How is a man of the world if there ever was one.

"At 9:30 in the morning," he explained, "the students assemble to see

## Living Alumni Total Thirty Thousand

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Three hundred students and eight graduates—that was the beginning of Cornell. To-day Cornell has 30,000 living graduates. Aside from Harvard and Yale, more Cornell men went to the war than from any other educational institution in the United States. Cornell's present endowment amounts to \$17,000,000. Before the disruption caused by the war Cornell had a student body of 5,500. The freshman class yearly approximates 1,000. Such are the results of fifty years of Cornell University—and Cornell is still growing.

If some better reason than these figures is needed for celebrating Cornell's semi-centennial the thousands of graduates gathered there during the last of the week must have found it in the solid realization that Cornell, despite its later beginnings, is sharing a place with the greatest and the oldest universities in America.

Still, it was considerably less than fifty years ago that Andrew Dickson White, the first of Cornell's three presidents, asked a New York ticket agent for a ticket to Ithaca, and the ticket agent said:

"Ithaca? Ithaca? It seems to me I have heard of such a place."

If he had not heard of it then,

if there are any prospects of a job in sight. Should they fail in getting a job we meet at 11:30 and try to find out why there are so many more men than there are jobs. We study civil economics for an hour. Then we join in a light luncheon and after that we study industrial law.

"That," Mr. How concluded, "is the curriculum as it stands at present."

And who were the men who absorbed it? That tall gentleman, sedate and distinguished, seated by the wall, was

he a student in the university? No, he was not.

"That is Brother Meaker," Mr. How explained. "Doesn't he look like the Apostle Paul?"

### Like the Apostle

Brother Meaker's face was ruddy from the outdoors. Through his beard his chin was square and determined. If he resembled the Apostle Paul he did not seem overpleased with the comparison. W. Lathrop Meaker is a

leading light in the Liberal Socialist League, which sponsors a number of reforms, including a four-hour day at 50 cents an hour, in order to provide employment for all without overproduction, not to mention a project for the seizure by the government of the entire food reserve, thus guaranteeing three meals a day to all who are willing to work. Brother Meaker had come to speak to the students of the university.

"I have been through two colleges,"

said Brother Meaker, "and this one makes the third, but I think Mr. How has hit upon a big idea."

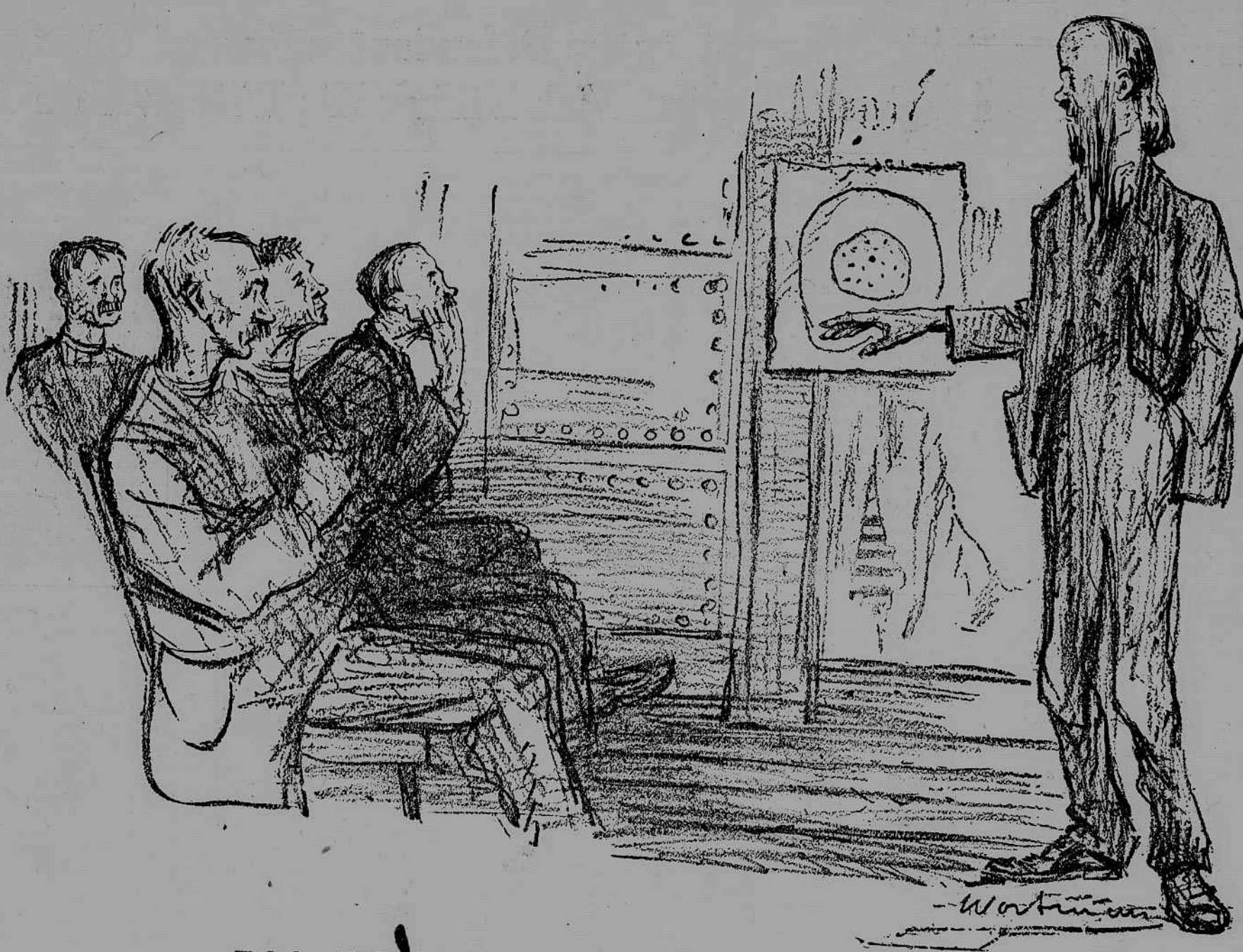
Then footsteps sounded in the room. The student body, all five of them, excepting the one who came in at lunch time, was convening. They did not look like hobos any more than their president. They affected a careless dress suited to the casual worker. They were not talking or laughing, but filled in solemnly and took their seats, and Mr. How shook hands with

each in turn, which is a great deal more than most university presidents will undertake.

And then the session opened. Mr. How opened the second week of the college with a few remarks about the laboring man and art.

"Down where I come from," he said, "the negroes sing a song that goes: 'Every day'll be Sunday by and by, and if we only had shorter hours and right conditions every day would be a day of gladness.'"

And to prove that the laboring men



W. Lathrop Meaker, hobo philosopher and liberal socialist, lecturing on Ego

## "Getting Back to Fundamentals Our Aim," Says Mr. How, the President

are writing poetry and music and gradually inculcating it into their work, he led a song, and sang it very well too, with the following refrain:

Hold the fort, we are coming,  
Union men, be strong.  
Side by side we battle onward,  
Victory will come.

Even in the interval of wondering whether "strong" and "come" rhymed Mr. Meaker was introduced, prepared to talk on social economics; but first he also sang a song in a strong barytone. There was no doubt about it, Mr. Meaker knew how to sing:

Awake! Awake! Put on thy strength  
and loose thy bands;  
Arise and shine! thy banners all unfurled:  
Go forth! Go forth! united sons of many  
lands,  
Proclaim the year of jubilee to all  
the world.

The song finished, Mr. Meaker straightened up to his full six feet and addressed the class. Tall and imposing he looked, and as he spoke his words were equally imposing.

Mr. Meaker had addressed the university before, and this morning he desired to go through what might be called a preliminary examination whereby he and the class might know one another better, the better to gauge their mutual capacity. Mr. Meaker would be glad to answer any question on the social problem. He paused expectantly, but he only had to pause for a second. And then one of the students of the hobo college spoke up.

"Is it true," he inquired in the pleasantly argumentative voice of a man of learning, "that man is naturally egotistical? Is man a social being? Is religion essential to him?"

And thus, out of a perfectly clear sky and in one fell swoop, started the automatic sprinkler of the Pierian Spring, which drowned out the sound of the elevated and furnished refreshment for the next hour, an intellectual cocktail to whet the appetite for the lunch to come.

"Hold on," expostulated Mr. Meaker, "you are asking three questions instead of one," but Mr. Meaker was not to be daunted by any of the vagaries blamed on man. Mr. Meaker holds the title of the Hobo Philosopher and he was ready to display it.

Mr. Meaker called for a paper and a tack, and then equipping himself with a fragment of brick, he endeavored to nail the paper against the door, the better to explain his point. It proved to be an interesting struggle of mind against matter, with matter well up in first place. After hammering for a time Mr. Meaker discovered the door was made of iron and likely to resist the efforts of the tack. Undaunted by the possible symbolism, he tried the wall, and there the paper remained affixed.

While the university watched him he made a dot in the geometrical centre of the circle.

"Let this dot," said the lecturer, "represent the human entity, since all the philosophy of Descartes, Leibnitz and the rest must come down to this in the last analysis."

"And these other dots will represent other human beings besides the ego, and this circle represents human society, because there must be a limit to human society somewhere."

"And let this circle represent the limit of the animal kingdom, and this circle," and here he drew a very large one indeed, "this circle represents all."

"Of course," he acknowledged, "there is infinity, which is commonly supposed to represent everything beyond human comprehension, but we can include everything, even the universe, in the term 'all.'"

The Hobo University had not moved, had not shifted its position. It sat in quiet contemplation, staring at the whole plan of things as it hung, shivering slightly from a draft from somewhere out of the cosmos that tested the hold of the tack on the plaster.

"There you have it," Mr. Meaker continued. "There you have the ego which has been brought forth by society. Consequently man, though egotistical, is social, and man in turn has come from the universe by the process of evolution. He has come from the animals, just as the animals came from plants. And if man comes from the universe, if we come from the universe, why the universe must at least be as alive and real as we are. Hence man is essentially religious and man must adjust himself, both to society and to the universe."

Which all goes to prove that they teach philosophy at the Hobo University; real technical philosophy. As the president says: "The laboring man has listened and clapped and cheered the sentiments of people he cannot understand."

"He has done all this too long. Now the time has come when he is going to learn about society and all the rest of it for himself."

Has the time come? Is he doing it? As far as the casual workers are concerned, all you have to do is to attend a session of the Hobo University at 202 Bowery, at 11:30, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, to form your own conclusions.

# Cornell Celebrates Half Century Mark

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surely he has since. The agents of a score of railroads heard of it last week, for six thousand alumni have made their way from all points in the United States back to their alma mater.

It was Ezra Cornell who founded the college, as many a successful man has before and since who looks back with sorrow on the opportunities he lost through an inadequate education. He had done very well with the schooling he received, and had made a solid fortune out of the Morse telegraph. Honest, practical and clear of vision, he had one great idea, destined to make his name large in the lexicon of American education.

"I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study," said Ezra Cornell.

His wish, ably carried on by the officers of the university, probably accounts for the embracing scope of Cornell education. There are ten colleges at Cornell—Arts and Sciences, Law, Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Agriculture, Architecture, Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Chemistry and Physics. Ever since the beginning the student has had the fullest possible liberty to choose what he wishes to learn, unhampered by unnecessary requirements.

Liberty of education, however, was not the only liberal point of Ezra Cornell's theories. He believed in vocational training, but was broad minded enough to realize fully the value of classical training besides, and to the best of his ability he made provision for both. Then, again, though born and bred a Quaker, he determined from the very beginning that the college he was going to found should be distinctly non-sectarian. Though such a decision seems natural enough today, fifty years ago it was momentous, arousing the animosity of many people of strong religious convictions, including the officers of vari-

ous sectarian colleges. Cornell for a time became synonymous with the term "Godless education," but Cor-

nell still persisted. The founder had another idea, which has become as firmly fixed in the present generation as that of religious toleration.

Esra Cornell believed that women should share equally with young men the opportunities a college afforded of becoming useful members of society. Instead of founding a women's college, like Matthew Vassar, he brought forward the idea of co-education.

In 1864 Ezra Cornell became Senator of the State of New York and entered the office full of his educational project. Andrew D. White, soon to be the first president, was his colleague and chairman of the Senate Committee on Education. He soon became an interested and sympathetic listener to Senator Cornell's ideas, until, after many conferences, a bill to charter the new university appeared before the Legislature, drafted by Charles F. Folger. The new university was to receive the United States land grants apportioned to the State of New York, which aroused natural opposition among the other colleges of the state. But the bill, under the able guidance of its friends, finally passed, and the charter for Cornell was granted in 1865.

On a hill rising high above the southern end of Lake Cayuga, and overlooking the little town of Ithaca Ezra Cornell and Andrew D. White decided to found their university. Incidentally, they selected one of the most beautiful places in the country for the campus, with a panorama of miles of New York State, the outlook over the miles of lake, the steep declivities into the two gorges which flank the campus to the north and south. The enthusiastic Cornellian—and every Cornellian is an enthusiast—will tell you that Cornell is situated in the Alps of America, that there is nothing in the world more beautiful than the Cornell campus, and many non-Cornellians will agree with him.

When the university opened its doors after a strenuous period of building and organization it found

## How University Put Ithaca on the Map

itself headed by one of the ablest teachers in the country who, it is generally agreed, is chiefly responsible for Cornell's success. Andrew Dickson White was educated at Hobart and Yale and later at Oxford. Besides a study of history, which resulted in his writing several books, he was interested in the theory of education. He brought all his conclusions to bear in the perfecting of Cornell. He guided it through its early days of hostile criticism, watching the student body hover about the 300 mark until as late as 1881. All the time he was building the foundations of a truly great university. His reputation as a teacher brought many wealthy benefactors, and his interest in the alumni kept the Cornell spirit alive for years after they had passed through the gates.

From the very beginning there was a crew on Lake Cayuga, and student activities were in full sway by the first commencement. Perhaps the daily climb up the hill from Ithaca to the campus has something to do with it, but at any rate Cornell became a leader in athletics—a most desirable advertisement for any university.

So many reasons are given for Cornell's quick rise that it is hard to find the right one. Suffice it to say that Cornell's alumni list has risen from eight to 30,000 men and women, all in a single lifetime; that Cornell graduates have taken leading places in almost every walk of life. They are in the halls of Congress. Eight states have chosen them for governors. The largest corporations are using them for engineers and lawyers. In the state of New York there are more judges in the Supreme Court and in the Court of Appeals from Cornell than from any other university or college.

The country has heard of Ithaca and the country will continue to hear from it.



Statue of Esra Cornell unveiled at Ithaca to-day